

Docket No.: 1075.1138

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE
BEFORE THE BOARD OF PATENT APPEALS AND INTERFERENCES

In re the Application of:

Tomoki NISHIMURA

Serial No. 09/760,888

Group Art Unit: 3625

Confirmation No. 4968

Filed: January 17, 2001

Examiner: Thein, Maria Teresa T.

For: METHOD AND SYSTEM FOR DISPLAYING CUSTOM-MADE PRODUCT
SPECIFICATION INFORMATION, SERVER AND TERMINAL FOR THE SYSTEM, AND
METHOD OF SELECTING CUSTOM-MADE PRODUCT SPECIFICATIONS

APPEAL BRIEF

Mail Stop Appeal Brief-Patents
Commissioner for Patents
PO Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

Sir:

In response to the Final Office Action in the above-identified application, and pursuant to the Notice of Appeal filed April 21, 2005, Applicants submit this Brief with the fee of \$500.00 set forth by 1.17(c). A Petition for Extension of Time and the required fee of \$450.00 requesting a two-month extension has been concurrently filed herewith extending the period for filing this brief to August 21, 2005.

(I) Real Party In Interest

The real party in interest in this appeal is the assignee FUJITSU LIMITED of Kawasaki, Japan.

(II) Related Appeals and Interferences

The undersigned attorney, the appellant and the assignee know of no related appeals or interferences which would be directly affected by or directly affect or have a bearing on the Board's decision in this appeal.

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(III) Status of Claims

Claims 1-21 are currently pending, claims 1-21 stand finally rejected and claims 1-21 are appealed.

(IV) Status of Amendments

No amendments have been filed subsequent to the final rejection. In reply to the final Action mailed October 21, 2005, a Response And Request For Withdrawal Of Final Rjection was filed on March 21, 2005 and the Examiner responded with an Advisory Action mailed April 11, 2005.

(V) Summary of the Claimed Subject Matter

The subject matter of the claimed method and apparatus claims involves allowing a customer to specify a custom made product, particularly computer systems. The invention includes a manufacturing server (10, figure 1, page 15, line 12+) communicating with a customer apparatus (20, figure 1, page 15, line 12+). The manufacturer server stores different product specifications (figure 2, page 19, line 1+) along with appearance image information or visual images of the systems (or display and computer body forms, including desktop and non-desktop forms) as they would appear from the exterior (figure 3, page 20, line 17+). That is, the different configurations as they would visually appear to the customer when they actually received the computer system. The server provides these product specifications (S16, figure 4, page 25, line 18+) in the visual form in a first or initial menu (figure 8, page 25, line 18+). The customer is allowed to select one of the visual image configurations from the menu. Based on this selection, the manufacture server provides (S18, figure 4, page 27, line 6+) a second menu to the customer apparatus (figure 9, page 27, line 6+). This second menu includes interior parts for the computer systems where the specifications for these interior parts are stored in the manufacturer server. In particular, the second menu is limited to interior parts that correspond to and are specific to the system selected from the visual images based first menu (Abstract, page 5, line 24+, page 19, line 11+ & page 27, line 18+). The second menu can be used by the customer to select the interior parts for the computer system selected via the first menu (figure 10, page 31, line 23+).

The second menu not only specifies interior part specification types or kinds but also candidates for each kind (figure 11, page 32, line 6+). That is, options of options for the interior parts.

The second menu also provides a delivery estimate for each of the options that are received from the manufacturer server (figure 9, page 27, line 23+).

After the selection from the first and second menus, the manufacturer server creates a confirmation page that contains the appearance image information and that corresponds to the selections that have been made and the confirmation page is transmitted to the customer apparatus and displayed (figure 12, page 32, line 18+).

(VI) Grounds Of Rejection To Be Reviewed On Appeal

Whether claims 1-21 are unpatentable under 35 U.S.C section 103 over the Henson (6,167,383) in view of Smith (6,052,669).

(VII) Argument

For convenience the substance of the final rejection of the final Action and the Advisory Action are set forth below.

A. The Final Rejection

The final rejection states:

Claims 1-21 rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,167,383 to Henson in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,062,669 to Smith et al.

Regarding claims 1 and 6, Henson discloses a method and system comprising:

- a manufacturer server pre-storing interior specifications of respective product parts to be selected by the customer (see at least col. 4, lines 36-52; col. 5, lines 29-54; col. 6, lines 5-43; col. 7, lines 39-56; Figures 3-6)
- at the customer terminal displaying a first menu containing specification showing the respective candidates custom-made products; selecting a candidate of the specification from the first menu on the display section, the selecting being performed by the customer; and displaying a second menu containing interior specifications of specific interior parts of different categories of interior parts, where the specific interior parts of the different categories corresponding specifically to the selected candidate customer-made product of the specifications, where the interior specifications are displayed for selection by the customer, upon receipt from the manufacturer server (see at least col. 4, lines 53-66; col. 5, line 66 - col. 6, line 6; col. 6, lines 18-43; Figures 3-6).

However, Henson does not disclose the appearance specifications corresponding to respective different exterior product parts, each appearance specification of a given exterior product part includes an appearance specification image. Henson

discloses a customer with the ability to go to the product information for the particular product, customize the product, price-customized product, purchased the product and other actions (col. 4, lines 43-47). Furthermore, Henson discloses the view module, which includes an all option configurator view (col. 9, lines 8-12). Smith, on the other hand, teaches the appearance specifications (see at least col. 9, lines 12-28; col. 9, lines 44-47; col. 9, lines 58-64; col. 10, lines 19-35; Figures 5-10).

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention was made to modify the method and system of Henson, to include the appearance specification, as taught by Smith, in order for a customer to obtain a realistic display of the configuration (Smith col. 4, lines 18-20).

Regarding claims 2-3, 7-8, 11-12, and 15, Henson discloses the second menu contains the kinds of the interior specification and all the candidates for each kind; delivery information about an estimated delivery term for every candidate is displayed, and confirmation page; and the custom-made product is a personal computer (see at least Figures 3-6; Figures 9-10; col. 4, lines 53-56; col. 6, line 31-43; col. 7, lines 13-21; col. 7, lines 39-56; col. 7, line 57-col. 8, line 6; col. 8, line 56 - col. 9, line 25).

Regarding claims 4-5, 9, and 13, Henson substantially discloses the claimed invention, specifically the confirmation page and the custom-made product is a personal computer (see at least col. 4, lines 53-56; col. 5, lines 1-2; col. 7, lines 57-61; col. 7, line 66 - col. 8, line 6; col. 8, lines 34-50).

However, Henson does not disclose the appearance specifications. Henson discloses a customer with the ability to go to the product information for the particular product, customize the product, price-customized product, purchased the product and other actions (col. 4, lines 43-47). Furthermore, Henson discloses the view module which includes an all option configurator view (col. 9, lines 8-12). Smith, on the other hand, teaches the appearance specifications (see at least col. 9, lines 12-28; col. 9, lines 44-47; col. 9, lines 58-64; col. 10, lines 19-35; Figures 5-10).

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention was made to modify the method and system of Henson, to include the appearance specification, as taught by Smith, in order for a customer to obtain a realistic display of the configuration (Smith col. 4, lines 18-20).

Regarding claim 10, Henson discloses a manufacture server has a database which stores information of a prospective custom-made product which includes a plurality of candidates for forthcoming selection by the customer, the database also previously storing interior applications information; the manufacturer server reads out from the database a plurality of kinds of candidates; and the manufacturer server reads out the interior specifications information from the database which information corresponding to the selected candidate of the appearance specifications, and transmit the read-out interior specifications information, which includes a plurality of candidates, to the customer for displaying as a second menu so that the customer can select. (See at least col. 4, lines 36-52; col. 5, lines 29-54; col. 6, lines 5-43; col. 7, lines 39-56; Figures 3-6)

However, Henson does not disclose the appearance specifications. Henson discloses a customer with the ability to go to the product information for the particular product, customize the product, price-customized product, purchased the product and other actions (col. 4, lines 43-47). Furthermore, Henson discloses the view module, which includes an all option configurator view (col. 9, lines 8-12). Smith, on the other hand, teaches the appearance specifications (see at least col. 9, lines 12-28; col. 9, lines 44-47; col. 9, lines 58-64; col. 10, lines 19-35; Figures 5-10).

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention was made to modify the server of Henson, to include the appearance specification, as taught by Smith, in order for a customer to obtain a realistic display of the configuration (Smith col. 4, lines 18-20).

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However, Henson does not disclose the appearance specifications. Henson discloses a customer with the ability to go to the product information for the particular product, customize the product, price-customized product, purchased the product and other actions (col. 4, lines 43-47). Furthermore, Henson discloses the view module, which includes an all option configurator view (col. 9, lines 8-12). Smith, on the other hand, teaches the appearance specifications (see at least col. 9, lines 12-28; col. 9, lines 44-47; col. 9, lines 58-64; col. 10, lines 19-35; Figures 5-10).

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention was made to modify the server of Henson, to include the appearance specification, as taught by Smith, in order for a customer to obtain a realistic display of the configuration (Smith col. 4, lines 18-20).

Regarding claim 14, Henson discloses a customer terminal comprising a display section for displaying various kinds of information; the display section displays a first menu containing information of a prospective custom-made product for specifications which are to be reflected on the prospective custom-made product and have a plurality of candidates; and the display section displays a second menu containing interior specification information about the prospective custom-made product. (See at least col. 4, lines 53-66; col. 5, line 66 - col. 6, line 6; col. 6, lines 18-43; Figures 3-6)

However, Henson does not disclose the appearance specifications. Henson discloses a customer with the ability to go to the product information for the particular product, customize the product, price-customized product, purchased the product and other actions (col. 4, lines 43-47). Furthermore, Henson discloses the view module which includes an all option configurator view (col. 9, lines 8-12). Smith, on the other hand, teaches the appearance specifications (see at least col. 9, lines 12-28; col. 9, lines 44-47; col. 9, lines 58-64; col. 10, lines 19-35; Figures 5-10).

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention was made to modify the server of Henson, to include the appearance specification, as taught by Smith, in order for a customer to obtain a realistic display of the configuration (Smith col. 4, lines 18-20).

Regarding claims 16-20, Henson substantially discloses the claimed invention. However, Henson does not disclose the appearance specifications. Henson discloses a customer with the ability to go to the product information for the particular product, customize the product, price-customized product, purchased the product and other actions (col. 4, lines 43-47). Furthermore, Henson discloses the view module, which includes an all option configurator view (col. 9, lines 8-12). Smith, on the other hand, teaches the appearance specifications (see at least col. 9, lines 12-28; col. 9, lines 44-47; col. 9, lines 58-64; col. 10, lines 19-35; Figures 5-10).

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention was made to modify the method of Henson, to include the appearance specification, as taught by Smith, in order for a customer to obtain a realistic display of the configuration (Smith col. 4, lines 18-20).

Regarding claim 21, Henson discloses a method of allowing a customer to customize a custom-made product, the method comprising: receiving an initial menu from a manufacturer server and displaying the initial menu at a customer apparatus; allowing the customer to select a computer system from the initial menu; and in response to the selecting, receiving, from the manufacturer server, at the customer apparatus, a second menu where the second menu allows the customer to specify various computer parts from among candidate computer parts of different computer part categories, where there specified various computer parts are specified as computer parts for customizing a custom-made computer having a same body form type and a same display of the previously selected computer system, and where the candidate parts to be selected from among are a set of parts specific to the type of body of the custom-made computer, where different computer body form types have different sets of candidate computer parts that are specific to such body form type (see at least summary; col. 4, lines 26-54; col. 5, lines 29-54; col. 6, lines 5-43; col. 7, lines 39-56; col. 5, line 66 - col. 6, line 6; Figures 3-6).

However, Henson does not disclose the images. Henson discloses a customer with the ability to go to the product information for the particular product, customize the product, price-customized product, purchased the product and other actions (col. 4, lines 43-47). Furthermore, Henson discloses the view module, which includes an all option configurator view (col. 9, lines 8-12). Smith,

on the other hand, teaches the images (see at least col. 9, lines 12-28; col. 9, lines 44-47; col. 9, lines 58-64; col. 10, lines 19-35; Figures 5-10).

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention was made to modify the method of Henson, to include the images, as taught by Smith, in order for a customer to obtain a realistic display of the configuration (Smith col. 4, lines 18-20).

(Action mailed October 21, 2004).

B. The Advisory Action

The Advisory Action states:

The request for reconsideration has been considered but does NOT place the application in condition for allowance because:

The arguments are not persuasive. For example, Applicants' remark that "the Examiner that there is a relation between the selected candidate appearance and the interior parts displayed with the second menu. However, the Examiner has not responded to these features and this argument, and did not change the citations to Henson with respect to the second menu feature to point to a portion of Henson that addresses or suggest these features". The Examiner does not concur. Henson discloses the second menu containing specifications of specific interior parts of different categories. In col. 9, lines 1-8, Henson discloses the selection of a first option (first menu) and then includes only those options (second menu), which are compatible to the first options. Furthermore, Figure 5 discloses an all option view, where the selection of the "Pentium 11 processor, 400 MHz with 512 L2 Cache" is selected, then a menu of all system selection options are shown. The options include "Memory" and "Hard drive". Under each "Memory" option and "Hard Drive" option are a list of types of memory and hard drive a customer can select. Such first option, which includes additional options that are compatible with the first option; and the options of selecting the type of memory and hard drive are considered the selected candidate and the interior parts displayed with the second menu. The Examiner then turns to Smith to teach the appearance of the selected candidates.

(Advisory Action, mailed April 11, 2005)

C. The Prior Art Relied Upon By Examiner

The text of Henson and Smith relied upon by the Examiner is set forth below:

According to one embodiment, a web-based online store having a user interface for enabling a custom configuration of a computer system according to an identification of a user belonging to a prescribed customer set includes a configurator, a cart, a checkout, and a database. The configurator is provided for configuring a computer system with options selected according to a prescribed user input. The options and a respective pricing for each option are presented on a configurator web page in accordance with the identification of the user belonging to a prescribed customer set. The cart is provided for temporarily storing the customer configured computer system, wherein the cart includes a cart web page. The checkout is provided for presenting payment options and for

obtaining payment and delivery information. The checkout further includes a checkout web page. Lastly, the database is provided for dynamically supplying configuration options to the configurator in accordance with the identification of the user belonging to the prescribed customer set.

In another embodiment, the configurator further includes merchandising recommendations for available options and their respective option details, the merchandizing recommendations being presented on the configurator web page. The cart further includes merchandising recommendations for add-on options, the merchandizing recommendations being presented on the cart web page. The payment options of the checkout are presented on the checkout web page. The database is further for dynamically supplying the merchandizing recommendations to the configurator in accordance with the identification of the user belonging to the prescribed customer set. The database is also further for dynamically supplying the merchandizing recommendations to the cart in accordance with the identification of the user belonging to the prescribed customer set. The database is still also further for dynamically supplying the payment options to the checkout in accordance with the identification of the user belonging to the prescribed customer set.

In yet another embodiment, the configurator further includes a warning indicator for indicating an option which is subject to adversely impacting a shipment of the configured computer system. The online store includes yet other additional options and features as discussed herein. An online store user interface is disclosed also.

The online store of the present disclosure includes a single online store which advantageously generates a given online store view for a particular customer set, customizable per customer. While the online store has the appearance of many different stores to many different customers, in essence, it's the same core online store but customizable for each customer and database driven. Customization of the online store has thus been advantageously improved, in conjunction with the added features as discussed herein.

The embodiments of the online store of the present disclosure advantageously improve upon accuracy, reliability, and overall quality of an online buying experience through an enhanced online commerce application specific to the ordering of custom-configured computer systems, including personal computer systems. The embodiments of the online store are optimized for responsiveness (availability and speed) to customer requests and for completeness in servicing of customer demand for personal computer related information.

(Henson, col. 2, line 61-col. 3, line 54 - Summary)

In conjunction with the present embodiments, an on-line store is one component of an Internet website for which a customer may go to configure a particular computer system, for example, according to desired options of the customer. The on-line store is typically a subset of a larger Internet website. At the on-line store, a customer can select one or more products that the customer is interested in. Upon selection of a particular product, the on-line store presents the customer with the ability to go to the product information for the particular product, customize the product, price the customized product, purchase the product, and other actions as discussed herein. While shopping happens in the website (i.e., selection of a particular kind of system (chassis) by a customer), when the customer is ready to purchase a customized system, the customer is then

directed (invisibly) to that part of the website which the on-line store application controls.

Referring now to FIG. 1, the present implementation of an online store 10 for use in generating customer configured machines, i.e., customer configured computer systems, will be discussed herein below. The online store 10 includes a welcome or introductory module 12, a commerce application module 14, and a thank you module 16 (i.e., appreciation for your order). The present embodiments further include an enhanced online store user interface, which advantageously enables the system configuration, pricing, and ordering of a computer system via the Internet. The commerce application 14 includes a configurator 18, shopping cart 20, checkout 22, and database 24. The database 24 provides information to the configurator 18, shopping cart 20, and checkout 22, as illustrated by arrows 26. The configurator 18 includes a pricing module 28, a view module 30, a lead time warning module 32, a validation (or compatibility) warning module 34, and a merchandising module 36. The various modules of the configurator 18 are being driven by data from the database 24, as further discussed herein below.

(Henson. col. 4, line 36-col. 5, line 5)

As discussed herein, the online store of the present disclosure includes a smart process. The degree of smartness of the present online store is greater than that of a prior online store, wherein a level of smartness in the prior online store was focused on the configurator. The configurator of the prior online store would present to the user the system selected off from the welcome page and include all available options. The smartness of the prior online store was in describing the choices for the system which the customer had selected. The present online store takes into account that some choices are not as right as others. Thus the configurator of the present online store has been made smarter. A level of smartness has also been added to the shopping cart and the checkout, where such a level of smartness did not exist previously. Thus the smartness of the configurator has been improved and smartness has been added to the cart and checkout. Programming code for executing the improved smartness and the added smartness can be included in a separate programming module or software package or can be integral with the online store commerce application. The database and the online commerce application that drives the database make up the online store. The database can be included within the commerce application of the online store, also. Programming code and the functions as described herein may be implemented using programming techniques well known in the art.

(Henson, col. 5, lines 29-54)

Turning now to FIG. 2, a customer can access the online store 10 using any suitable computer equipment 40, via the Internet 42. The computer equipment 40 may include a display 42, computer 44, keyboard 46, and pointing device 48. Display 42 is used for displaying the various pages of the online store while a customer is using the online store.

Referring briefly to FIG. 11, a system block diagram of a computer system 50 is shown having features thereof configured in accordance with the online store 10 as discussed herein. The computer system 50 includes a central processing unit (CPU) 52, input/output (I/O) devices, such as a display, a keyboard, a mouse, and associated controllers, collectively designated by a reference numeral 54, a hard disk and drive 56, and other storage devices, such as a floppy disk and drive and other memory devices, collectively designated by a reference numeral 58, and

various other subsystems, collectively designated by a reference numeral 60, all interconnected via one or more buses, shown collectively in FIG. 11 as a bus 62. Turning now to FIG. 3 (3A, 3B, and 3C), from a system configuration options screen 70, a customer of the online store 10 can build a customer configured machine by selecting from options listed on the configuration screen 70. The pricing option module 28 includes an update price function. The update price function causes the price displayed on the configuration screen to reflect any changes made to the system options. Selection of the update price function can be accomplished by clicking on an "UPDATE PRICE" icon 72 on the configuration screen. Upon obtaining a desired configuration, a customer could then select the "ADD TO CART" icon 74 to add the configured system to the shopping cart 20 and continue shopping, as desired.

The present online store application and system provide an on-line store application, which includes configuration, pricing, validation, shipment delay indication, and merchandising modules. The validation module provides validation of some form with respect to the customer built configuration. The shipment delay indicator provides the customer with any lead time warnings or shipment delays which would occur as a result of the selection of specific options. In addition, the merchandising module provides messaging, alternatively referred to herein as merchandising information or messaging, of options recommended to be selected in a particular configuration, including, for example, which options may be better than others.

(Henson, col. 5, line 66-col. 6, line 43)

The shipment or lead time delay indicator of the present embodiment advantageously provides an advance or early indication to the customer of a potential shipment delay which could occur as a result of having selected a particular option. The customer thus does not have to wait until after having submitted the order, but rather can find out about any shipment delays as the customer is configuring and/or building his particular computer system online. The shipment or lead time delay indicator is preferably a dynamic indicator.

(Henson, col. 7, lines 13-21)

Merchandising module 36 includes merchandising messaging 79, option recommendations 75, and option details 76. Still referring to FIG. 3, option recommendations 75 provide for the display of a text message for the express purpose of recommending an option selection 77 at each option selection point within the configurator. Additional usage to further educate or assist customer selection of valid system options was also recognized. Option recommendation/text messaging are obtained from entries in the store produce database 24. Option details 76 provide an ability to link from the configurator to more specific detailed information about the system selection options presented. Links are made possible at each point where a system option selection was possible to aid in the choosing of the correct option from displayed alternatives. The presence of a link is triggered by the entry of a web page location (i.e., URL) for the page containing the detailed information in the store product database 24. The on-line store further includes validation of a configuration built by a customer. Validation (or compatibility) provides the customer with a validation message indicating an occurrence of when the options selected for a particular system are not correct. If the options selected for a particular system will adversely affect the shipment of the configured system, then a warning message is issued to enable

the user to modify options accordingly. In other words, the validation enhancement lets the customer know when one or more options are not compatible for one reason or another. The validation enhancement includes built-in logic which checks the particular configuration built by the customer and indicates whether or not the selected options can be built together for the particular configuration. If two or more options are incompatible, then in one embodiment, the validation enhancement returns a message indicating that the options are incompatible, as further discussed herein.

(Henson. col. 7, line 39-col. 8, line 6)

Validation preferably includes a cross-checking of a combination of options. The cross-checking determines whether or not the particular combination of options can be physically built. For instance, a product group may indicate that certain things cannot fit or that the selected motherboard will only allow three things to be added, however, the customer has selected four things. Another example might include, a particular option requiring the selection of a second option, so the additional option must be selected, otherwise the system cannot be built or an indefinite shipment delay will result.

Validation of a customer built system assists in increasing a customer order compliance on the part of the on-line store. Those orders which do not comply (i.e., orders for systems which for one reason or another cannot physically be built) are advantageously managed down to a significantly lowered percentage of occurrences than previously achievable. Customers of the on-line store application thus receive advance warning when an option will not work for a given configuration. The customer can then modify, change, and/or delete the particular option, which gave rise to the validation warning.

With respect to the present embodiments, two types of validation are contemplated. A first type of validation is referred to as passive validation. Passive validation relates to the validation module knowing that specific options don't work together, and providing a validation message that specific options should not be included in the same configuration. A second type of validation is referred to as active validation. Active validation is the active cross-checking of the options of a configuration and indicating the occurrence of a problem when the problem is detected. That is, upon the detection of the specific options within the same configuration, a warning can be provided to the customer. Alternatively, upon the selection of a first option, wherein the first option cannot exist with a second option within the same configuration, selection of the second option can be disabled. In the latter instance, one embodiment may include only those options which are compatible to the first option to be enabled when displayed. Additionally, messages can be displayed indicating the particular incompatibility with the second option, for example.

With reference again to the configurator, the view module 30 includes an "all option" configurator view. That is, an ability to change from a standard view 70 (as shown in FIG. 3) to an "all option" view 90 (as shown in FIG. 5) is provided. The standard view of the online configurator is where system options 77 are presented via "drop-down" selection boxes and only the currently selected option is displayed. The standard view is preferably the default display, i.e., displayed without a shopper action. However, selection of the standard view may be accomplished via selection of the standard view selection button 96 (FIG. 3) The "all option" configurator view is where all system selection options are shown at the same time. In the later view, selections are made via use of "radio buttons"

92. Activation of the "all option" configurator view is made by selection of the appropriate view selection button 94 (FIG. 5).

(Henson, col. 8, line 34-col. 9, line 25)

Generally, at any stage of the furniture configuration, the user is able to obtain a realistic display of the configuration and is then able to view that display from arbitrary view points.

(Smith, col. 4, lines 19-22)

By selecting the new typical icon 142, the user is able to select a typical workstation configuration which satisfies the user's requirements input in the planning stage (at P106).

When the user selects the new typical icon 142 a graphical depiction of various typical workstation configurations 180 is displayed on the screen. Each of these displayed typical configurations should satisfy some of the user's requirements, at least with regard to privacy, work area and electrical connectivity. Price and space requirements cannot always be satisfied until a complete clustered configuration is determined.

The user can select one of the displayed typical workstation configurations by clicking on it with the pointer device 104. The selected typical configuration is highlighted and displayed on the screen (at 182).

The system is pre-configured with a number of so-called typical configurations, and preferably the typicals displayed on the typical screen are those which satisfy the customer's criteria entered at the customer needs screen (reached by selecting the planning guide icon 166).

(Smith, col. 9, lines 9-28)

Preferably the image is displayed in a selected color and with a selected texture, that is, in the color and texture of the actual product. Selection of color and texture will be described below.

(Smith, col. 9, lines 44-47)

The properties screen allows the user to specify a workstation at a detailed level. Every attribute of every part in the workstation can be selected to create a customer's configuration, which is then displayed on the screen. The system only allows a user to select valid attributes for each particular component. In that way each displayed configuration is consistent and valid as to its attributes.

(Smith, col. 9, lines 58-64)

The user can apply fabric and finishes to a typical product by selecting the select material icon 146 with the pointer 104. This enables the user to change all fabric and finish options on each individual component or on all components. When the user selects the select material icon 146, order generation system 114 presents the user with fabric color and finish options on the screen as shown in FIG. 10. The order generation system 114 will only allow the user to change fabric or finish to valid (manufacturable components in the product line) options for the current components. In this way, the configuration depicted on the screen is always valid with respect to its fabric and finish. In order for the user to change a fabric or color, the user selects the appropriate option from those shown on the screen. The fabrics/colors are presented in families (three families in the example in FIG.

10), so that selecting one color for a particular component will change the other parts of that component to the appropriate color from the family.
(Smith, col. 10, lines 18-35)

The Examiner also relied upon figures 3-6, 9 and 10 of Henson and figures 5-10 of Smith.

D. Comparison of the Claimed Invention to the Prior Art

1. Henson

Henson discusses a system for building custom order computer systems, and more particularly, discusses an online store with a user interface that enables a customer to custom configure a computer system. Pricing and ordering is also included. In Henson, the online store is a general merchandise type store that is part of a much larger web site in which the user can shop. In the store, the user is allowed to use a computer system. In this system, the user is allowed to pick technical specification options for the system from a menu, such as memory size and type of sound card. The user is allowed to pick options that are not compatible (that is, that will not work together) and Henson provides a system that is intended to reduce the number of orders taken by the online store that cannot be manufactured to a low percentage (see col. 8, lines 34-55). To aid in this reduction, Henson has two alternative types for reducing invalid orders (see col. 8, lines 56-57). The first type is called passive and provides the user with a configuration warning (see col. 8, lines 57-67). In the second type, the ability of the user to select a displayed option is disabled. Non-compatible options, even though they are displayed, are not selectable (see col. 9, lines 1-8). As particularly stated by Henson: "only those options which are compatible to the first option to be enabled when displayed" (see col. 9, lines 5-6). That is, the non-compatible options are shown/displayed, but just not selectable. The menu in Henson also comes in two types, a standard menu in which drop down lists of options are provided and an all options view. That is, in both of the Henson menu types all options are shown, but in different ways.

2. Smith

Smith is directed to a system for furniture configurations. In the Smith system, a user is allowed to input the users furniture "needs" (see col. 5, line 60-col. 6, line 4). Once the needs criteria are input, the system analyzes the needs and selects a furniture configuration that satisfies the needs (see Abstract). Once a configuration is identified, a perspective view of the configured furniture can be seen by the user. The user can then change the configuration and see a perspective view of the changed configuration.

Claim 1

The invention of method claim 1 is directed to a system that connects a "customer" to a "manufacturer". This connection involves connecting a "customer apparatus" to a "manufacturer server." This is in contrast to a customer coupled to an online store in Henson or a user coupled to a modeling tool in Smith. Neither Henson nor Smith teach or suggest coupling a customer to a manufacturer.

This connection can be used by the customer to create "a custom-made product." To allow the custom product to be efficiently created and the information transfer between the customer apparatus and server to be performed efficiently, the invention pre-stores ("pre-storing") , in or "at the manufacturer server", "appearance specifications" of the "exterior of a product parts" and pre-stores "interior specifications of interior parts" for the exterior specifications. This is in contrast to the storage of technical specifications in the online store in Henson or furniture components in the modeling tool in Smith. It is submitted that neither Henson or Smith teach or suggest pre-storing appearance specifications.

The pre-storing also includes the pre-storing of an "appearance specification image" for each of the exterior product parts. The Examiner acknowledges that Henson does not provide for these appearance specification images. The Examiner turns to Smith to allegedly supply this missing feature.

To allow the user to easily customize the product, at the "customer apparatus" the manufacturing server sends and the customer apparatus receives ("upon receipt") from the manufacturer server the "specification images" that are displayed in a "first menu". That is, the first menu shows images of the exterior product "parts" of the custom product. The "customer" is allowed to select ("selecting") one of the appearance specifications. As noted above, Henson does not provide for these appearance images and, thus, there is no possibility of making an appearance image selection in Henson. Such a selection of a system from a first menu of appearance images is also not provided by Smith. Smith is looked to by the Examiner for image display not menu issues. As discussed previously above, in Smith the user first inputs needs criteria, the system then selects a configuration that matches the needs and then the user can view the configuration. The user selects product criteria before the furniture view is produced in Smith. Further, the furniture configuration displayed by Smith based on the determination from the needs is not a menu. That is, Smith does not teach or suggest making a selection from a first menu of images, much less one from a menu of appearance images.

After the selection, the display displays a "second menu" that contains the "interior specifications" of "specific interior parts" of the custom made product. The "specific" interior part specifications "correspond specifically" to the "selected" one of the "appearance specifications." In particular, these specific interior part specifications are sent by and received ("upon receipt") from the manufacturer server. The second menu display is limited to the specific interior parts that correspond to the selected exterior parts selected via the appearance of the exterior part. The Examiner, in the Advisory Action, asserts that this feature is taught by Henson. However, as discussed above, Henson is limited to a single menu of two types, all options and pull down lists. That is, there is no second menu in Henson. In addition, in both types of the Henson menu, the options, even incompatible options are displayed but they are just not enabled for selection. That is, Henson does not teach or suggest a second menu or a second menu that is limited by the selection made in the first menu.

For the above-discussed reasons, it is submitted that the present invention distinguishes over Henson and Smith and reversal of the rejection of claim 1 is requested.

Claim 2

Claim 2 depends from claim 1 and is patentable over the prior art for the reasons discussed above with respect to claim 1. Claim 2 also calls for the second menu to include kinds of interior specifications and the candidates for each kind. That is, the second menu provides further options ("kinds") for interior specifications and within the interior part specification kinds further options ("candidates"). Henson provides a menu with all options shown or a menu with pull down lists of all options. No second menu with further options of options is taught by Henson. Smith does not address this

For the above-discussed reasons, it is submitted that the present invention distinguishes over Henson and Smith and reversal of the rejection of claim 2 is requested.

Claim 3

Claim 3 depends from claim 2 and is patentable over the prior art for the reasons discussed above with respect to claim 2. Claim 3 also calls for a delivery estimate for the candidate options of the interior parts in the displayed second menu. Henson and Smith do not teach or suggest such a part option by part option delivery estimate. And the estimate is provided by the manufacturer. The Henson store indicates delivery delay with a "!" symbol but does not supply an estimate for each delayed part (see figures 4 and 5). And that delivery delay indicator is provided after the user selects an option that will result in a delivery delay (see col. 6,

lines 31-38). The invention of claim 3 provides the estimates with the candidate display. This allows the user to see the delay before a selection of an interior option is made. This is not taught or suggested by Henson. That is, neither Henson nor Smith teach or suggest such these features.

For the above-discussed reasons, it is submitted that the present invention distinguishes over Henson and Smith and reversal of the rejection of claim 3 is requested.

Claim 4

Claim 4 depends from claim 3 and is patentable over the prior art for the reasons discussed above with respect to claim 3. Claim 4 also calls for creating a confirmation page of the appearance image results of the selection, transmitting that and displaying it to the customer. The Examiner points to the validation operation of Henson. The validation operation of Henson provides a warning or disables selection of invalid options. As acknowledged by the Examiner Henson does not display configuration images of a selection and the validation operation of Henson is not a confirmation.

For the above-discussed reasons, it is submitted that the present invention distinguishes over Henson and Smith and reversal of the rejection of claim 4 is requested.

Claim 5

Claim 5 depends from claim 4 and is patentable over the prior art for the reasons discussed above with respect to claim 4.

Claim 6

Independent claim 6 is a system claim that calls for the features of claim 1 including a manufacturer server that pre-stores appearance images of the custom made products and interior specifications for the image selections and a customer apparatus that displays the images in a first menu from which the customer selects and displays a second menu of the interior specifications that corresponds to the image selection. It is submitted that claim 6 is patentable over Henson and Smith for the reasons discussed above with respect to claim 1.

In addition, claim 6 calls for the manufacturer server to transmit the first menu to the user and then, based on the selection, transmit the second menu to the customer apparatus. The second menu is sent after the selection from the first menu. That is, only what is needed or requested is sent to the customer in the second menu. Smith does not address this issue. Henson provides a menu with all options displayed or with pull down lists of all options. That is,

the entirety of options is provided by Henson. There are no first and second transmissions much less one of selected information.

For the above-discussed reasons, it is submitted that the present invention distinguishes over Henson and Smith and reversal of the rejection of claim 6 is requested.

Claim 7

Claim 7 depends from claim 6 and is patentable over the prior art for the reasons discussed above with respect to claim 1. Claim 7 also calls for the second transmission (of the second menu) to include kinds of interior specifications and the candidates for each kind. That is, the second menu provides further options ("kinds") for interior predications and within the interior part specification kinds further options ("candidates"). As discussed above, Henson provides a menu with all options shown or a menu with pull down lists of all options. No second menu with further options of options is transmitted by Henson. Smith does not address this

For the above-discussed reasons, it is submitted that the present invention distinguishes over Henson and Smith and reversal of the rejection of claim 7 is requested.

Claim 8

Claim 8 depends from claim 7 and is patentable over the prior art for the reasons discussed above with respect to claim 7. Claim 8 also calls for a delivery estimate for the candidate options of the interior parts in the transmitted second menu. Henson and Smith do not teach or suggest such a part option by part option delivery estimate in a second transmission. And the estimate is provided by the manufacturer. The Henson store indicates delivery delay with a "!" symbol but does not supply an estimate for each delayed part (see figures 4 and 5). And that delivery delay indicator is provided after the user selects an option that will result in a delivery delay (see col. 6, lines 31-38). The invention of claim 8 provides the estimates from the manufacturer and with the candidate display. This allows the user to see the delay from the manufacturer before a selection of an interior option is made. This is not provided or suggested by Henson. That is, neither Henson nor Smith teach or suggest such these features.

For the above-discussed reasons, it is submitted that the present invention distinguishes over Henson and Smith and reversal of the rejection of claim 8 is requested.

Claim 9

Claim 9 depends from claim 8 and is patentable over the prior art for the reasons discussed above with respect to claim 8. Claim 9 also calls for creating a confirmation page of the appearance image results of the selections in the first and second transmitted menus, transmitting that confirmation page and displaying it to the customer. The Examiner points to the validation operation of Henson. As acknowledged by the Examiner, Henson does not display configuration images of a selection and a validation operation that provides a warning or disables selection of invalid options is not a confirmation.

For the above-discussed reasons, it is submitted that the present invention distinguishes over Henson and Smith and reversal of the rejection of claim 9 is requested.

Claim 10

Independent claim 10 calls for a manufacturing server whereas Henson discusses an on-line store and Smith discusses a modeling system. No teachings or suggestions of a manufacturing server are provided.

In addition, the manufacturing server pre-stores appearance images of the custom made products and interior specifications for the image selections and interior part specifications for the image selections. The server transmits the image selections to the customer apparatus in a first menu, and based on the selection from the first menu, transmits the interior part selections to the customer apparatus in a second menu. A customer apparatus displays the images in a first menu from which the customer selects and displays a second menu of the interior specifications that corresponds to the image selection. It is submitted that claim 10 is patentable over Henson and Smith for the reasons discussed above with respect to claims 1 and 6.

For the above-discussed reasons, it is submitted that the present invention distinguishes over Henson and Smith and reversal of the rejection of claim 10 is requested.

Claim 11

Claim 11 depends from claim 10 and is patentable over the prior art for the reasons discussed above with respect to claim 10. Claim 11 also calls for the second menu sent by the manufacturing server to include kinds of interior specifications and the candidates for each kind. That is, the second menu provides further options ("kinds") for interior predications and within the interior part specification kinds further options ("candidates"). Henson provides a menu with all options shown or a menu with pull down lists of all options. No second menu with further

options of options sent by a manufacturing server is taught by Henson. Smith does not address this

For the above-discussed reasons, it is submitted that the present invention distinguishes over Henson and Smith and reversal of the rejection of claim 11 is requested.

Claim 12

Claim 12 depends from claim 11 and is patentable over the prior art for the reasons discussed above with respect to claim 11. Claim 12 also calls for a delivery estimate for the candidate options of the interior parts in the displayed second menu delivered by the second transmission by the manufacturer server. Henson and Smith do not teach or suggest such a part option by part option delivery estimate. The Henson store indicates delivery delay with a "!" symbol but does not supply an estimate for each delayed part (see figures 4 and 5). And that delivery delay indicator is provided after the user selects an option that will result in a delivery delay (see col. 6, lines 31-38). The invention of claim 12 provides the estimates with the candidate display transmission. This allows the user to see the delay before a selection of an interior option is made. This is not provided or suggested by Henson. That is, neither Henson nor Smith teach or suggest such these features.

For the above-discussed reasons, it is submitted that the present invention distinguishes over Henson and Smith and reversal of the rejection of claim 12 is requested.

Claim 13

Claim 13 depends from claim 12 and is patentable over the prior art for the reasons discussed above with respect to claim 12. Claim 13 also calls for the manufacturing server to create a confirmation page of the appearance image results of the selection, transmitting that and displaying it to the customer after the selection through the first and second menus. The Examiner points to the validation operation of Henson. As acknowledged by the Examiner, Henson does not display configuration images of a selection and a validation operation that provides a warning or disables selection of invalid options is not a confirmation.

For the above-discussed reasons, it is submitted that the present invention distinguishes over Henson and Smith and reversal of the rejection of claim 13 is requested.

Claim 14

Independent claim 14 calls for a customer apparatus to communicate with a manufacturing server whereas Henson discusses an on-line store and Smith discusses a

modeling system. No teachings or suggestions of communicating (receiving communications from) a manufacturing server are provided.

In addition, the customer apparatus receives and displays appearance image information of the custom made products and interior specifications for the image selections and interior part specifications for the image selections. The customer apparatus receives the image selections in a first menu in a first receipt and based on the selection from the first menu in the customer apparatus receives the interior part specifications in a second receipt. That is in the customer apparatus displays the images in a first menu from which the customer selects and displays a second menu of the interior specifications that corresponds to the image selection. It is submitted that claim 14 is patentable over Henson and Smith for the reasons discussed above with respect to claims 1, 6 and 10.

For the above-discussed reasons, it is submitted that the present invention distinguishes over Henson and Smith and reversal of the rejection of claim 14 is requested.

Claim 15

Claim 15 depends from claim 14 and is patentable over the prior art for the reasons discussed above with respect to claim 14. Claim 15 also calls for the second menu received by the customer apparatus to include kinds of interior specifications and the candidates for each kind. That is, the second menu provides further options ("kinds") for interior specifications and within the interior part specification kinds further options ("candidates"). Henson provides a menu with all options shown or a menu with pull down lists of all options. No second menu with further options of options received by a customer apparatus from a manufacturing server is taught by Henson. Smith does not address this

For the above-discussed reasons, it is submitted that the present invention distinguishes over Henson and Smith and reversal of the rejection of claim 15 is requested.

Claim 16

Independent claim 16 is directed to a method that communicates ("transmitting") to a "customer" from a "manufacturer". This communication involves a "customer apparatus" communicating with a "manufacturer server." This is in contrast to a customer coupled to an online store in Henson or a user coupled to a modeling tool in Smith. Neither Henson nor Smith teach or suggest communicating between a customer apparatus and a manufacturer server.

This communication can be used by the customer to create "a custom-made product." To allow the custom product to be efficiently created and the information transfer between the customer apparatus and server to be performed efficiently, the invention transmits from the manufacturer server "appearance image information" of "appearance specifications" which reflect the appearance and transmits "interior specifications" of the product parts for the exterior specifications. This is in contrast to the use of technical specifications in the online store in Henson or furniture components in the modeling tool in Smith. It is submitted that neither Henson or Smith teach or suggest pre-storing appearance specifications.

The transmitting includes the transmitting "appearance image information" that "reflects the appearance" of the custom made product. The Examiner acknowledges that Henson does not provide for this appearance specification image information. The Examiner turns to Smith to allegedly supply this missing feature.

To allow the user to easily customize the product, the manufacturing server sends specification image information in the form of plural candidates to be displayed in a "first menu". That is, the first menu shows images of the appearance of the custom product. The customer is allowed to select ("selecting") one of the appearance specification candidates from the first menu. As noted above, Henson does not provide for these appearance images and thus there is no possibility of making an appearance image selection in Henson. Such a selection from a first menu of appearance images is also not provided by Smith. Smith is looked to by the Examiner for image display not menu issues. As discussed previously above, in Smith the user first inputs needs criteria, the system then selects a configuration that matches the needs and then the user can view the configuration. The user selects product criteria in Smith before the view is produced in Smith. That is, Smith does not teach or suggest selection of a system from a first menu of image information that reflects appearances of the custom made product.

After the selection, the manufacturing server transmits and the display displays a "second menu" that contains the "interior specifications" of the custom made product. The interior part specifications correspond ("corresponding") to the "selected candidate" from the appearance specification images. That is, the display is limited to the interior specifications that correspond to the selected appearance of the product. The Examiner, in the Advisory Action, asserts that this feature is taught by Henson. However, as discussed above, Henson is limited to a single menu of two types, all options and pull down lists. That is, there is no second menu in Henson. In addition, in both types of the Henson menu, the options, even incompatible options are displayed but they are just not enabled for selection. That is, Henson does not teach

or suggest a second menu or a second menu that is has a display limited by and corresponding to the selection made in the first menu.

For the above-discussed reasons, it is submitted that the present invention distinguishes over Henson and Smith and reversal of the rejection of claim 16 is requested.

Claim 17

Claim 17 depends from claim 16 and is patentable over the prior art for the reasons discussed above with respect to claim 16. Claim 17 also calls for the second menu transmitted to the customer apparatus to include kinds of interior specifications and the candidates for each kind. That is, the second menu provides further options ("kinds") for interior specifications and within the interior part specification kinds further options ("candidates"). Henson provides a menu with all options shown or a menu with pull down lists of all options. No second menu with further options of options received by a customer apparatus from a manufacturing server is taught by Henson. Smith does not address this

For the above-discussed reasons, it is submitted that the present invention distinguishes over Henson and Smith and reversal of the rejection of claim 17 is requested.

Claim 18

Claim 18 depends from claim 17 and is patentable over the prior art for the reasons discussed above with respect to claim 17. Claim 18 also calls for a delivery estimate for the candidate options of the interior parts in the displayed second menu delivered by the second transmission to the customer apparatus. Henson and Smith do not teach or suggest such an option by option delivery estimate. The Henson store indicates delivery delay with a "!" symbol but does not supply an estimate for each delayed part (see figures 4 and 5). And that delivery delay indicator is provided after the user selects an option that will result in a delivery delay (see col. 6, lines 31-38). The invention of claim 18 provides the estimates with the candidate display transmission to the customer apparatus. This allows the user to see the delay before a selection of an interior option is made. This is not provided or suggested by Henson. That is, neither Henson nor Smith teach or suggest such these features.

For the above-discussed reasons, it is submitted that the present invention distinguishes over Henson and Smith and reversal of the rejection of claim 18 is requested.

Claim 19

Claim 19 depends from claim 18 and is patentable over the prior art for the reasons discussed above with respect to claim 18. Claim 19 also calls for creating a confirmation page of the appearance image results of the selection, transmitting it to the customer apparatus and displaying it. The Examiner points to the validation operation of Henson. As acknowledged by the Examiner, Henson does not display configuration images of a selection and a validation operation that provides a warning or disables selection of invalid options is not a confirmation.

For the above-discussed reasons, it is submitted that the present invention distinguishes over Henson and Smith and reversal of the rejection of claim 19 is requested.

Claim 20

Claim 20 depends from claim 19 and is patentable over the prior art for the reasons discussed above with respect to claim 19.

Claim 21

Independent method claim 21 is a method that allows a "customer apparatus" to interact with a "manufacturer server" to allow a customer to customize a product. As discussed above, Henson is limited to interaction with an on-line store and Smith with a furniture modeling system. The invention of claim 21 also calls for providing to the customer at the customer apparatus an "initial menu" and a "second menu". The initial menu "shows images" of computer systems, acknowledged by the Examiner as not found or suggested by Henson. The images correspond to "different displays configured with different types of computer body forms." As discussed above, Smith has the user input furniture needs before any furniture configuration is determined from the input needs and displayed. That is, Smith (and Henson) does not teach or suggest an initial menu of images much less a menu of images of displays configured with computer body forms.

Claim 21 also calls for the display images of the initial menu to include a "desk top" type computer body form and a "non-desktop" type computer body form. Henson, as acknowledged by the Examiner, does not teach or disclose images. The Examiner turns to Smith for an alleged teaching of images. However, Smith provides images of furniture. There is no suggestion in Smith of the providing of desktop and non-desktop images that are used for making customized product selections.

Claim 21 calls for allowing the customer to select a computer system from the initial image menu. There is no teaching or suggestion in Henson or Smith of this. Henson discusses initial selection of components from a list of component specifications and Smith initially has the user input needs and there is no ability to select from a menu much less a menu of images.

Once the user has made a selection from the images menu ("in response to the selecting"), the customer apparatus receives a "second menu" from the manufacturer server. This second menu allows the customer to select parts for the computer selected from the images. In particular, the parts of the menu are "specified as computer parts" for a computer "having a same body form type and a same display" as the "previously selected computer system" and the parts are "specific to the type of body" and the "different computer body form types have different sets of candidate computer parts that are specific to such body form type." That is, the second menu is a limited menu limited to parts for the body and display previously selected from the images. No such limited menu is taught or suggested by Henson or Smith.

For the above-discussed reasons, it is submitted that the present invention distinguishes over Henson and Smith and reversal of the rejection of claim 21 is requested.


D. Conclusion

It is submitted that Henson and Smith do not teach or suggest the features of the present invention recited in any of claim 1-21 and reversal of the rejection thereof is requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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(VIII) Claims Appendix

1. A method of displaying, on a display section of a customer apparatus, specification information about a custom-made product upon receipt of the specification information from a manufacturer server via a communications network, the method comprising:
 - at the manufacturer server
 - pre-storing appearance specifications corresponding to respective different exterior product parts, each appearance specification of a given exterior product part including an appearance specification image, where the appearance specification image corresponds to the exterior appearance of a candidate custom-made product as it would appear when customized by the customer to include the given exterior part;
 - pre-storing interior specifications of respective interior product parts to be selected by the customer to customize the interior of the custom-made product;
 - at the customer apparatus
 - displaying, on the display section, a first menu containing the appearance specification images showing the appearance of the respective candidate custom-made products, for selection by a customer, upon receipt from the manufacturer server;
 - selecting at least one candidate custom-made product of the appearance specifications from the first menu on the display section, the selecting being performed by the customer; and
 - displaying, on the display section, a second menu containing interior specifications of specific interior parts of different categories of interior parts, where the specific interior parts of the different categories correspond specifically to the selected candidate custom-made product of the appearance specifications, where the interior specifications are displayed for selection by the customer upon receipt from the manufacturer server.
2. A displaying method according to claim 1, wherein during said displaying of the interior specifications information at the customer apparatus, said second menu contains the kinds of the interior specifications and all the candidates for each kind.
3. A displaying method according to claim 2, wherein at the customer apparatus, delivery information about an estimated delivery term for every candidate is displayed on the display section upon receipt from the manufacturer server.

4. A displaying method according to claim 3, wherein after said selecting of the appearance specifications and the interior specifications from the first and second menus, the manufacturer server creates a confirmation page containing the appearance image information of the prospective custom-made product, which information corresponds to the result of said selecting, and transmits the confirmation page to the customer apparatus for displaying on the display section.

5. A displaying method according to claim 4, wherein the custom-made product is a personal computer, and the appearance specifications are display specifications.

6. A system for displaying specifications information of a custom-made product, comprising:

a manufacturer server having a database which previously stores appearance image information of a prospective custom-made product as appearance specifications which are to reflect the appearance of the prospective custom-made product and which have a plurality of candidates for forthcoming selection by the customer, said database also previously storing interior specifications information about interior specifications of the prospective custom-made product for forthcoming selection by the customer; and

a customer apparatus communicably connected to said manufacturer server and having a display section for displaying various kinds of information;

said manufacturer server reads out from said database a plurality of kinds of the appearance image information, as candidates of the appearance specifications and transmits the read-out candidates of the appearance specifications to said customer apparatus for displaying on said display section as a first menu with which a customer selects at least one desired candidate;

said manufacturer server reads out the interior specifications information from said database, which information corresponds to the selected candidate of the appearance specifications, and transmits the read-out interior specifications information, which includes a plurality of candidates, to said customer apparatus for displaying on said display section as a second menu so that the customer can make selections.

7. A displaying system according to claim 6, wherein during the displaying of the interior specifications information at said customer apparatus, said manufacturer server displays,

on said display section of said customer apparatus, said second menu contains the kinds of the interior specifications and all the candidates for each kind.

8. A displaying system according to claim 7, wherein said manufacturer server transmits delivery information about an estimated delivery term for every candidate to said customer apparatus for displaying on said display section.

9. A displaying system according to claim 8, wherein after the selecting of the appearance specifications and the interior specifications from the first and second menus, said manufacturer server creates a confirmation page containing the appearance image information of the prospective custom-made product, which information corresponds to the result of said selecting, and transmits the confirmation page to said customer apparatus for displaying on said display section.

10. A manufacturer server, adapted to be communicably connected with a customer apparatus, for use in a system for displaying specifications information of a custom-made product on a display section of the customer apparatus, wherein:

said manufacturer server has a database which previously stores appearance image information of a prospective custom-made product as appearance specifications which are to reflect the appearance of the prospective custom-made product and have a plurality of candidates for forthcoming selection by the customer, said database also previously storing interior specifications information about interior specifications of the prospective custom-made product for forthcoming selection by the customer;

said manufacturer server reads out from said database a plurality of kinds of the appearance image information, as candidates of the appearance specifications and transmits the read-out candidates of the appearance specifications to said customer apparatus for displaying on said display section as a first menu with which a customer selects at least one desired candidate; and

said manufacturer server reads out the interior specifications information from said database, which information corresponds to the selected candidate of the appearance specifications, and transmits the read-out interior specifications information, which includes a plurality of candidates, to said customer apparatus for displaying on said display section as a second menu so that the customer can make selections.

11. A manufacturer server according to claim 10, wherein during the displaying of the interior specifications information at said customer apparatus, said manufacturer server displays, on said display section of said customer apparatus, said second menu contains the kinds of the interior specifications and all the candidates for each kind.

12. A manufacturer server according to claim 11, wherein said manufacturer server transmits delivery information about an estimated delivery term for every candidate to said customer apparatus for displaying on said display section.

13. A manufacturer server according to claim 12, wherein after the selecting of the appearance specifications and the interior specifications from the first and second menus, said manufacturer server creates a confirmation page containing the appearance image information of the prospective custom-made product, which information corresponds to the result of said selecting, and transmits the confirmation page to said customer apparatus for displaying on said display section.

14. A customer apparatus, adapted to be communicably connected with a manufacturer server, for use in a system for displaying specifications information of a custom-made product on a display section of the customer apparatus, wherein:

said customer apparatus has a display section for displaying various kinds of information;

said display section displays a first menu containing appearance image information of a prospective custom-made product as appearance specifications which are to reflect the appearance of the prospective custom-made product and which have a plurality of candidates, said appearance image information of the individual candidates being received from said manufacturer server for selection from the displayed first menu by the customer; and

said display section also displays a second menu containing interior specifications information about interior specifications of the prospective custom-made product, where said interior specifications information corresponds to the selected candidate of the appearance specifications and being received from said manufacturer server for selection in the second menu by the customer.

15. A customer apparatus according to claim 14, wherein during the displaying of the interior specifications information at said customer apparatus, said display section displays said

second menu contains the kinds of the interior specifications and all the candidates for each kind.

16. A method of selecting specifications of a custom-made product, comprising:
transmitting, from a manufacturer server to a customer apparatus, appearance image information of a prospective custom-made product as appearance specifications which are to reflect the appearance of the prospective custom-made product and which have a plurality of candidates, and displaying, on a display section of the customer apparatus, a first menu containing the appearance specifications for every candidate for selection in the first menu by the customer;

selecting one candidate from all the candidates of said appearance specifications in the first menu displayed on the display section;

transmitting, from the manufacturer server to the customer apparatus, various kinds of interior specifications information about interior specifications of the prospective custom-made product, and displaying, on the display of the customer apparatus, a second menu containing all kinds of said interior specifications information corresponding to the selected candidate of the appearance specifications for selection in the second menu by the customer; and

selecting desired kinds of the interior specifications from the second menu on the display section by the customer as prospective interior specifications of the selected candidate.

17. A method according to claim 16, wherein during the displaying of the second menu, displaying the interior specifications information, said second menu contains all kinds of the interior specifications and all the candidates of the appearance specifications.

18. A selecting method according to claim 17, wherein during the displaying of the first menu, displaying the appearance specifications information and said second-named displaying step of displaying the interior specification information, delivery information about an estimated delivery term for every candidate is displayed on the display section upon receipt from the manufacturer server.

19. A selecting method according to claim 18, wherein after said selecting of the appearance specifications and the interior specifications from the first and second menus, the manufacturer server creates a confirmation page containing the appearance image information of the prospective custom-made product, which information corresponds to the result of said

selecting, and transmits the confirmation page to the customer apparatus for displaying on the display section.

20. A selecting method according to claim 19, wherein the custom-made product is a personal computer, and the appearance specifications are display specifications.

21. A method of allowing a customer to customize a custom-made product, the method comprising:

receiving an initial menu from a manufacturer server and displaying the initial menu at a customer apparatus, where the initial menu shows images of computer systems, the images of the computer systems corresponding to combinations of different displays configured with different types of computer body forms including at least a desktop computer body form and a non-desktop computer body form;

allowing the customer, with the customer apparatus, to select a computer system from the initial menu; and

in response to the selecting, receiving, from the manufacturer server, at the customer apparatus, a second menu, where the second menu allows the customer to specify various computer parts from among candidate computer parts of different computer part categories, where there specified various computer parts are specified as computer parts for customizing a custom-made computer having a same body form type and a same display of the previously selected computer system, and where the candidate parts to be selected from among are a set of parts specific to the type of body of the custom-made computer, where different computer body form types have different sets of candidate computer parts that are specific to such body form type.